

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 9834

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MX

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH FAUSTO ZAPATA

SUMMARY: ONE OF THE PRESIDENT'S CONFIDANTS, FAUSTO ZAPATA, SOUGHT AN APPOINTMENT WITH ME TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER A PERCEIVED DETERIORATION IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. HE GAVE A SELF-SERVING (I.E. GOM-SERVING) ACCOUNT OF THE COUP AT EXCELSIOR AND INTERESTING VIEWS ON THE PRESIDENT TRANSITION AND THE CURRENTLY MOST UNSTABLE COMPONENT OF THE MEXICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM--LABOR. END SUMMARY.

1. AT HIS REQUEST, I BREAKFASTED JULY 29 WITH FAUSTO ZAPATA LAREDO, WHO AS FORMER SUBSECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCIA WAS THE GOM'S PRESS SPOKESMAN AND CONFIDANT OF THE PRESIDENT. ZAPATA IS NOW SENATOR-ELECT FROM SAN LUIS POTOSI AND ALTHOUGH HE OBVIOUSLY MISSES HIS FORMER ROLE, HE CONTINUES IN THE LATTER. INDEED HE HAS UNDOUBTEDLY PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE PRESIDENT'S ACQUISITION OF A MAJOR INFLUENCE IN THE EL SOL CHAIN OF NEWSPAPERS FORMERLY OWNED BY GARCIA VALSECA. (THAT ACQUISITION, INCIDENTALLY, HAS BEEN PUBLICLY BY DENIED BY THE PRESIDENT) AND IS AGAIN BEING UTILIZED BY LUIS ECHEVERRIA TO ATTEMPT TO RESTORE
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RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE U.S. MEDIA.

2. BILATERAL RELATIONS

ZAPATA'S ONLY AVOWED PURPOSE IN SEEKING THEE APPOINTMENT WAS TO EXPRESS HIS PERCEPTION, DISAPPOINTMENT AND DISMAY THAT OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP HAD DETERIORATED, AND TO EXPRESS HOPE AND CONFIDENCE THAT IT WOULD IMPROVE. AFTER ALLUDING IN PASSING TO THE PRESIDENT'S ALL-TOO-FREQUENT EXPLANATIONS AND APOLOGIES HOW HE SAYS UNKIND THINGS FOR INTERNAL CONSUMPTION AND THE EFFECT THIS HAS HAD, I SUGGESTED TO ZAPATA THAT A COMBINATION OF FACTORS HAD SUCCEEDED IN ALIENATING AN IMPORTANT BASE OF SUPPORT FOR MEXICO IN THE U.S. -- THE AMERICAN PRESS. THESE FACTORS WERE THE GOM MEASURES AND PRONOUNCEMENTS LEADING TO THE JEWISH TOURISM BOYCOTT, THE ISSUE OF U.S. PRISONERS AND THE RELATED, WIDER ONE OF THE VIOLENCE U.S. TOURISTS WERE ENCOUNTERING AROUND THE COUNTRY, AND MORE RECENTLY THE EVENTS AT EXCELSIOR.

3. EXCELSIOR COUP

ZAPATA QUICKLY GAVE AN EXTENDED DEFENSE OF THE GOM'S INNOCENCE IN THE EXCELSIOR CASE, SAYING THE GOM HAD SEVERAL TIMES UNDER ECHEVERRIA BAILED SCHERER GARCIA AND EXCELSIOR OUT OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES (COMMENT: WHICH WERE PROBABLY ENGINEERED BY THE PRESIDENT) AND SCHERER GARCIA WAS IN FACT ONLY SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING FAILED TO MAINTAIN HIS BASES OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE COOPERATIVE. THUS, WHILE SUGGESTING ONE REASON FOR GOM HOSTILITY TOWARDS EXCELSIOR -- ITS TURNING ON ITS BENEFACTOR, THE GOM, ZAPATA CLAIMED THE COUP WAS PURELY AN INTERNAL MATTER WITHIN THE EXCELSIOR COOPERATIVE. ALSO SAID THAT SCHERER GARCIA HAD INTENDED TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES TO TELL HIS SIDE OF THE STORY TO THE U.S. PRESS BUT HAD BEEN "PERSUADED" OF THE INADVISABILITY OF THIS PLAN. (COMMENT: THIS ECHEVERRIA HOSTILITY TOWARDS SCHERER RECALLS THE OBSERVATION FROM THE MEMOIRS OF PABLO NERUDA THAT "THE (MEXICAN) PRESIDENT WAS AN AZTEC EMPEROR, A THOUSAND TIMES MORE UNTOUCHABLE THAN THE ROYAL CONFIDENTIAL

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FAMILY OF ENGLAND. NO PAPER, EITHER IN JEST OR IN EARNEST, COULD CRITICIZE THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE WITHOUT IMMEDIATELY RECEIVING A FATAL BLOW.")

4. ECHEVERRIA-LOPEZ-PORTILLO TRANSITION:

ZAPATA SPOKE BRIEFLY ABOUT THE TRANSITION PERIOD BETWEEN LOPEZ PORTILLO AND ECHEVERRIA. TENSIONS WERE INEVITABLE, BUT HE THOUGHT BOTH MEN WERE "DISCIPLINED"

ENOUGH TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT AND THEIR 39 YEAR OLD PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP WOULD BE A MITIGATING FACTOR AS WELL. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THE PRESIDENT MIGHT DO A GOOD BIT OF TRAVELING COUTSIDE MEXICO IMMEDIATELY AFTER JLP'S INAUGURATION DECEMBER 1 AS A PUBLIC GESTURE DISAVOWING ANY AMBITIONS AT "CONTINUSIMO"

5. LABOR POLITICS:

ZAPATA ALSO COMMENTED ON THE LABOR SCENE, THE AREA WHICH HE OBVIOUSLY FELT WOULD PRESENT THE MOST PROBLEMS DURING THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION. THE NEW LABOR LEADERS WERE DISSATISFIED AND THEY WERE BETTER EDUCATED AND TRAINED THAN THE OLDER GENERATION OF LEADERS. THE GOM HAD LONG BENEFITTED FROM THE CONTROL FIDEL VELAZQUEZ HAD EXTENDED OVER ORGANIZED LABOR AND WERE ANXIOUSLY WONDERING WHO COULD REPLACE HIM.

6. VIOLENCE TOWARDS TOURIST AND FRONCZAK CASE.

ZAPATA WAS UNAWARE OF THE FRONCZAK CASE; HE WAS HORRIFIED AT THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON MEXICO'S IMAGE AND ON THE TOURIST INDUSTRY. HE OFFERED TO BRING THE MATTER TO THE ATENTION OF THE PRESIDENT. JOVA

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